65,678-0011 (DCCIE 5298)

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1.   An electronic system for facilitating transactions comprising:

an asset configuration unit responsive to input data provided by a first user for generating a profile of an asset,
5   said profile comprising asset specification data and a bid definition defining parameters associated with one of a purchase, rental and lease transaction of said asset;

a market database for storing a plurality of said asset profiles;

10   a market search module configured to search said market database based on search parameters specific by a second user and generate an identification of assets according to said search parameters, said market search module being configured to display to said second user a portion of said asset specification
15   data for at least one of said identified assets;

a bid module configured to allow said second user to select said one of said identified assets for placement of a bid thereon, said bid module being further configured to provide at least one of purchase, rental and lease transaction options to
20   said second user in accordance with said bid definition; and

a communications interface for facilitating electronic remote access of said system by said first and second user.

2.   The system of claim 1 wherein said asset specification data includes maintenance history data, said market search module being further configured to display said maintenance history data for said at least one of said identified assets.

40

3.   The system of claim 2 wherein said bid definition includes a bid date defining when said asset will be available for placement of a bid thereon, and an availability date defining when said asset is expected to become available for delivery.

4.   The system of claim 2 wherein said bid definition includes a bidder classification parameter defining classes of users allowed to place a bid on said asset.

5.   The system of claim 4 wherein said user classes include a dealer class and a member class.

6.   The system of claim 4 wherein said bid definition further includes an identification of which of said purchase, rental and lease transactions are available to each class of users.

7.   The system of claim 6 wherein said bid definition further includes, for each transaction identified as being available for each class of users, respective transaction characteristic data.

8.   The system of claim 7 wherein said transaction characteristic data for a rental transaction comprises a list price for a predetermined period of time, and a minimum price that said second user must submit to define a valid bid.

9.   The system of claim 7 wherein said transaction characteristic data for a lease transaction comprises a periodic lease amount and a lease term.

10.   The system of claim 2 wherein asset configuration unit comprises a fleet module configured to generate and store said asset specification data in a fleet database, said configuration unit further including a bid definition module configured to

5   generate and associate said bid definition with said asset specification data to define said asset profile, said bid definition module being further configured to store said asset profile in said market database.

11.   The system of claim 2 wherein said bid module is further configured to generate a bid history for said first user including a detail of each bid submitted by said second user.

12.   The system of claim 2 wherein said bid is a first bid, said bid module being further configured to allow a third user to select said asset for placement of a second bid thereon, said bid module being further configured to provide purchase, rental and

5   lease transaction options for selection by said third user in accordance with said bid definition, said bid module being further configured to generate a bid history for said first user including a detail of each bid submitted for said asset by said second and third users of said system.

13.   The system of claim 12 wherein said bid module is further configured to allow said first user to choose one of said bids from said bid history, and to complete said transaction offered by said chosen bid.

14. An electronic system for establishing a virtual rental fleet of assets comprising:

a fleet module responsive to input data provided by a first user for generating asset specification data associated

5 with an asset, including maintenance history data;

a bid definition module responsive to further input data provided by said first user configured to generate a bid definition defining parameters associated with a rental transaction contemplated for said asset, said bid definition

10 module being further configured to associate said bid definition with said asset specification data to thereby define an asset profile that is stored in a market database;

a market search module configured to search said market database based on search parameters specified by a second

15 user, said market search module being further configured to generate an identification of assets according to said search parameters, and display to said second user at least a portion of a said asset specification data including said maintenance history data for one of said identified assets;

20 a bid module configured to allow said second user to select one of said identified assets for placement of a bid thereon, said bid module being further configured to provide rental transaction options to said second user in accordance with said bid definition, said bid module being further configured to

25 generate a bid history for said first user including a detail of said bid; and

a communications interface for facilitating electronic remote access of said system by said second user.

15. The system of claim 14 wherein said bid module is further configured to allow said first user to complete the rental transaction contemplated by said bid.

43

16.   The system of claim 15 wherein said second user is a first dealer registered with said system.

17.   The system of claim 16 wherein said first user is a second dealer registered with the system.

18.   A method of consigning an asset on an electronic market for rental, comprising the steps of:

(A)   generating asset specification data associated with an asset including maintenance history data using input data from a first user of the electronic market;

(B)   generating a bid definition defining parameters associated with a rental transaction of the asset using further input data from the first user;

(C)   storing the asset specification data and the bid definition together in an asset profile in a market database;

(D)   searching the market database based on search parameters specified by a second user and displaying to the second user at least a portion of the asset specification data that includes the maintenance history data;

(E)   providing rental options to the second user based on the bid definition; and

(F)   receiving, through a global computer network, a bid from the second user for a rental transaction.

19.   The method of claim 18 further comprising the step of:
registering the second user as a dealer.

20.   The method of claim 19 further comprising the step of:
registering the first user as a dealer.

21.   The method of claim 20 further comprising the steps
of:

    receiving an acceptance of the bid from the first
user; and

    closing the transaction specified by the bid.